



Coins on TV

by
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Lost coins, stolen coins, counterfeit coins – they all turn up on television, grist for murder, mayhem and comic misunderstandings.

Coins make for great drama. They're ubiquitous, hideable, portable, liquid and potentially valuable. A plot can twist on a tiny bit of easily lost, easily hidden metal no bigger than a fingernail.

Collectors notice coins on television, and everyone has a favorite story from Sheriff Andy Taylor's famous backwards buffalo to Hawaii Five-0's \$100,000 nickel. Collectors cringe a bit, too, when watching coins on TV shows. The coins are often abused to the point that they would lose much of their value to scratches and wear.

Gold doubloons and pieces of eight



The Mickey Mouse Club, Oct. 1, 1956



The Mickey Mouse Club was must-see TV for baby boomers in the 1950s. Every schoolday afternoon Walt Disney's mouse led a parade to start the show, which featured dancing and singing Mouseketeers, words of wisdom from Head Mouseketeer Jimmie Dodd and a really old cartoon or a serial adventure.

One of the serials, *The Hardy Boys: The Mystery of the Applegate Treasure*, revolved around a missing pirate treasure and enthralled a generation of budding collectors.

Each of the 19 10-minute episodes began with a piratish theme song backing bony hands ruffling through a treasure chest filled with coins.



The treasure chest appears to be filled with stage coins showing a portrait surrounded by stars on the obverse and a sold line on the back.

The theme song jauntily stated the serial's premise: a pirate treasure that had been handed down to Bayport's Silas Applegate had gone missing.

"Gold doubloons and pieces of eight, handed down to Applegate? From buccaneers who fought for years for gold doubloons and pieces of eight. Handed down in a pirate chest, the gold they sailed for east and west. The treasure bright that made men fight, till none were left to bury the chest. So now the gold and pieces of eight all belong to Applegate. The chest is here but wait ... now where are those gold doubloons and pieces of eight?"

The story is a reimagining of The Hardy Boys mystery *The Tower Treasure*.

[Treasure tale theme song](#)



Applegate's pirate chest has been missing for a decade when Frank (Tim Considine) and Joe Hardy (Tommy Kirk) are given a gold doubloon by Perry Robinson (Donald MacDonald), a trouble child who had been taken in by tower-owner Mr. Applegate (Florenz Ames).

Perry gives it to Joe Hardy and asks him to "Please keep it for me and not say anything" before giving himself up to police.

Later, at home, Joe shows it to his older brother, who exclaims, ""Hey, you know what? That's gold - solid gold."



The one real coin shown – the one the boys stumble across - is a lustrous 1808 Mexico City gold 8 escudos showing Ferdinand VII on the obverse and the Spanish coat of arms on the reverse. A common coin, the piece retails for about \$2,250 in Extra Fine condition.

At library the next day, they determine that it's an "ancient Spanish doubloon" issued by Ferdinand VII.

The librarian, Mrs. Snodgrass (uncredited), tells them, "That's what a doubloon is - pirate gold" and makes the first connection to the missing Applegate treasure.

"I guess the Applegate treasure is dead and buried by this time," she says cryptically.



*Ferdinand VII gold 8
Escudos 1808 Mo-TH
MS62 NGC, Mexico City
mint, KM110, Onza-1251.
Brilliant Uncirculated and
rather boldly struck.
Heritage: \$3,995
Jan. 4-5, 2014*

Over the next few weeks, the boys follow red herrings and real clues to eventually end up in an old water tower with a couple villains. After a fight in which the bad guys fall through the tower's rotten floor, the boys celebrate the discovery of the treasure chest.

Wrong-way buffalo

The Andy Griffith Show, Feb. 13, 1961

A running gag involving a fictional mint error plans a major part in the “Mayberry on Record” episode (season 1, episode 19) of The Andy Griffith Show and caused perhaps a few of the more gullible among us to check our change for a certain supposedly misstruck Indian Head 5-cent piece in the early 1960s.

At the beginning of the episode, Deputy Barney Fife (Don Knotts) says he’s looking for an investment “that zooms overnight.”

“It happens, you know,” he says, plopping himself down on top of a table. “Oil stocks and uranium.”

Sheriff Andy Taylor (Andy Griffith) cautions, “You better watch this investing business. The woods are full of con men. You’d be just ripe for the plucking, too.”



Andy, sitting at his desk, says, "Well now, I'll tell you. If you're really considering investing, why don't you try coin collecting?"

"Coin collecting for investing?" Barney asks.

Andy replies, "Well sure, its a good hobby, and you can't never tell when you'll come across a rare old coin that might bring you a whole lot of money."

"A coin? Cut it out," Barney says

“Well sure. Look here. Look right here,” Andy says opening his desk drawer and taking out a coin. “See that nickel right there. Now I paid \$10 for that nickel. A month later a fellow offered me 50 for it. It wouldn’t surprise me a bit if I was to advertise I’d get, oh, a couple hundred dollars.”

“For a nickel. How come,” Barney asks.

Andy replies, “Well, they made a mistake at the mint. Look right here. See that buffalo right there?”

“Yeah,” Barney affirms.

“Facing the wrong way,” Andy explains.

“Facing the wrong way?” Barney question as he tries to grab coin.

Andy pulls it away, saying, “And that makes it valuable. Yeah, I don’t suspect there’s more than two or three in the whole country.”



Andy tells Barney the coin keeps increasing in value because there are so few of them.

Hooked, Barney offers to buy it. “I couldn’t give you no 200, but might go 50 – 75.”

They agree on \$75 and shake hands. Andy hands the coin to Barney.

“Thank you. Andy. How about that! Let me just compare this to a regular nickel,” Barney says.

“Let’s see there,” Barney says as a frown spreads across his face. “Hey, Andy. The buffalo on this nickel is facing the same way”

Andy explains, “I was just trying to show you how easy it would be for you to get taken.”

Wrong-way buffalo episode

Record producer Mr. Maxwell (Hugh Marlowe)from New York then enters the sheriff’s office looking for local talent to record.

Later as Mr. Maxwell, Barney, Floyd the barber (Howard McNear) and others gather at Floyd’s barber shop (Haircuts ... \$1, says a sign in the background.) Maxwell explains that he makes 25 cents profit on each record - \$25,000 on a record that sells 100,000 copies

Barney and Floyd clamber to get in on the deal, with Barney investing \$40 in a “Music From Mayberry” album.

Andy smells a rat, but Barney insists everything is on the up and up until Mr. Maxwell unexpectedly checks out of the hotel.

“I shoulda sold him that nickel,” Andy mutters. “Then at least he’d own something worth a nickel.”

The town turns against Mr. Maxwell – with Barney planning roadblocks and an all-points bulletin. However, Maxwell soon returns with a distribution contract and a \$5,000 advance. He gives the check to Andy’s girlfriend to distribute as a dividend to local investors, leaving Andy to eat humble pie.

Besides the numismatic connection, the show is notable as the one of the few in the series’ eight-year run in which Andy ends up on the wrong end.

No wrong-way buffalo nickels are known, but Indian Head 5-cent piece errors are highly collectible. In 2010, a 1913 Bison on Plain variety nickel stuck on a dime planchet sold for \$46,000 at auction.